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SUBJECT: THREE COMMENTARIES ON ELECTION RESULTS, THE PM'S
FUTURE

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador spoke to an opposition leader, a Thai Rak Thai (TRT) "dove" and a TRT "hawk." The picture that emerges: each side feels a measure of vindication by the poll result, and each side is assessing its next move. The hawk claims Thaksin is ready to claim victory and forge ahead. The opposition leader said the protesters are ready to resume demonstrations. According to the dove, Thaksin is still mulling over his options. End summary.

THAKSIN WILL FIGHT

¶2. (C) Ambassador spoke to PM Thaksin's close advisor, Pansak Vinyaratn, a "hawk" who has consistently told us that Thaksin would vanquish his foes and continue in office. Pansak portrayed the election results as a success for TRT. He said that, after months of "black propaganda" by the press, TRT was "delighted" with its (almost) 50 percent of the vote in Bangkok. He predicted they would sweep the north and northeast. With well over half the vote nationwide, Thaksin would have a mandate. Nevertheless, in his appearance on TV tonight, Thaksin would again offer a national reconciliation government to oversee constitutional reform. Thaksin was resigned to the likelihood that that government would last about a year, and then there would be new elections again.

¶3. (C) Pansak said there would be no crackdown on government opponents, but the PM would "begin to administer" the country again. Demonstrations would be permitted, but only if they were carried out according to law, without libel or violence. The so-called "coup without tanks" has failed, Pansak said, adding that there was no possibility that the PM would step down. He admitted that the party had erred badly in the handling of the Shin Corp sale.

THE OPPOSITION WILL FIGHT

¶4. (C) Democrat Party stalwart Surin Pitsuwan spoke to the ambassador from his native South, where TRT got trounced in the elections. He said that the single TRT candidate got only 12 percent of the vote in his district, and that the total was expected to fall with successive re-votes. Therefore, there would be no way to get a clear winner from that constituency. (Many other districts, especially in the South, have produced similar results.) He said the opposition was prepared to launch more demonstrations starting April 7, expecting to mobilize the large number of citizens in Bangkok who voted "no" to turn out in "endless

demonstrations."

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

15. (C) Deputy PM Surakiart Sathirathai, one of the TRT 'doves' confirmed that the PM would likely offer a government of national reconciliation as his opening gambit. Surakiart's assessment, however, is that the PM is still analyzing the situation, and his views may change. He, like we, will be watching the PM on TV later tonight.

COMMENT

16. (C) We agree that Thaksin will be weighing his options while the vote count is still coming in. We expect the opposition to flat-out reject the olive branch of a national reconciliation government. As was the case before the election, both sides still believe that they have the upper hand. It would be very uncharacteristic of Thaksin to step aside now, but if he is to avoid more direct challenges to his authority, he will need to come up with proposals more palatable to the opposition and to the many people who voted, "get out."
BOYCE